

DIVORCE AND URBANIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES:
A STUDY OF COUNTIES, 1970 AND 1980

by

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Divorce has been a social issue in the United States since the first one was recorded in the Plymouth Colony in the 1600s. By 1804, the divorce rate in the U. S. was one in 100, and in the late 1920s, one out of every six marriages ended in divorce (Bohannon, 1985). The 1950s were characterized by postwar prosperity, changes in attitudes about home and family, and high marriage and birth rates. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a rising divorce rate, a rising age at marriage, and a declining birth rate (Cherlin, 1981). In the 1980s, one out of every two or three marriages ends in divorce (Bohannon, 1985). There have been a few periods in time when the divorce rate has leveled off, and occasionally fallen. But, for the most part, it has been steadily rising, and there is no indication that this trend will change significantly in the future (Bohannon, 1985).

In 1973 or 1974, for the first time in history, the number of marriages ended in divorce exceeded the number of marriages ended by death (Glick and Lin, 1986). Glynnis Walker in Solomon's Children (cited in Dowling, 1987) stated that by 1990 the number of families that consist of single parents and stepparents will be greater than the number of traditional nuclear families, unless the trend changes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most research on divorce has examined the individual determinants of divorce. This research has examined characteristics such as religion and religious commitment

(Thornton, 1985; Goode, 1965; Glenn and Supancic, 1984; Brodbar-Nemzer, 1986; Becker, Landes, and Michael, 1977; Fergusson, Horwood, and Shannon, 1984), the presence or absence of children (Lobodzinska, 1983; Becker et al, 1977; Coombs and Zumeta, 1970), attitudes about women in the work-force (Aghajanian, 1986), and the financial situation of the family (Coombs and Zumeta, 1970; Fergusson et al., 1984; Goode, 1965). Other factors are unemployment (Aghajanian, 1986; Coombs and Zumeta, 1970), education level (Goode, 1965; Glick and Norton, 1971; Norton and Mormon, 1987), race (Goode, 1965; Glick and Norton, 1971; Norton and Mormon, 1987; Glenn and Supancic, 1984), age at marriage (Goode, 1965; Aghajanian, 1986; Becker et al, 1977; Glick and Norton, 1971; Bumpass and Sweet, 1972; Norton and Mormon, 1987; Glenn and Supancic, 1984; Thornton, 1985), and changes in divorce laws (Aghajanian, 1986).

While such research is important, it does not allow us to explain the increasing divorce rate. Aggregate-level studies allow us to begin to examine the determinants of divorce rates. These studies have focused on the concept of social integration as an explanation for the variation in the divorce rate. Previous researchers have used population change, level of urbanization (Breault and Kposowa, 1987; Fenelon, 1971), and the like as measures of integration. Urbanization (population concentration in urban areas) has been found to be an important predictor of divorce rates. Degree of urbanization appears to have an impact on attitudes about marriage and the family and the family structure. More importantly, however, higher degrees of urbanization are seen to contribute to higher divorce rates because of reduced social integration.

The majority of the previous research has found a strong positive relationship between the divorce rate and degree of urbanization (Lobodzinska, 1983; Kawashima and Steiner, 1960; Kumagai, 1983; Breault and Kposowa, 1987). However, most of these studies are limited to one time period, based on unrepresentative samples, used few control variables, and/or used large ecological units such as states or regions.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This thesis has one major objective: to remedy the deficiencies of previous research by examining the effects of urbanization, as defined above, and several control variables on the divorce rate for a representative sample of 300 United States counties at two points in time (1970 and 1980). I chose to use the county as the unit of analysis to remedy the problems associated with the use of individual level data, as discussed above, or highly aggregated data which restricts the variation in the variables. These time periods were used because they were the only ones for which data on all of the variables are available at the county level.

The main hypothesis is: **the higher the degree of urbanization in a county in the United States, the higher the divorce rate.** The independent variable is degree of urbanization and the dependent variable is the divorce rate. However, there are additional variables that the literature suggests may have a relationship with divorce rates. These variables include church membership, percent population change; median family income; median population age; unemployment rate; percent in professional employment; and percent nonwhite which will be used as control variables.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This thesis is important because divorce is an increasing and widespread issue in today's society. As we move to a more urban society and increased divorce rates, there is a need for a finer understanding of the relationship between these phenomena. By testing the present hypothesis, I hope to fill a void in the previous literature and contribute to the knowledge base about divorce in our society. I will also suggest that the ultimate causes for the increasing divorce rate is not necessarily one of declining moral fiber of people or of a decreasing emphasis on marriage. If we look at this issue in terms of social integration, we can see that one result of increasing urbanization is

disintegration. Therefore, it is the isolation, individualism, anonymity, and lack of social control associated with urbanization that contributes to the increasing divorce rate. It is not just a problem of individuals, but one that must be addressed by every county, state, and nation.

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

This chapter first discussed divorce in the past and present. Next, the findings and problems of the individual level research were addressed. Third, the approach and deficiencies of the research at the aggregate level were discussed. A statement that the purpose of this thesis is to remedy these deficiencies followed. Finally, the significance of the thesis was discussed.

The remainder of the thesis is arranged into four chapters. Chapter Two contains the development of the theoretical argument for the relationship between urbanization and the divorce rate and a summary of the previous empirical research. Chapter Three contains the discussion of the data and method, and Chapter Four reports results of the analysis. A summary of the thesis, discussion of the implications, and suggestions for future research are presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Two

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter One, aggregate level research has focused on the concept of social integration as an explanation for increased numbers of divorce and reports that urbanization is a strong predictor of divorce rates. This chapter consists of an examination of this literature. More specifically, this chapter consists of three sections: (1) a discussion of the theoretical background and argument; (2) an examination of the previous research; and (3) summary and conclusions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Durkheim (1951) was concerned with social solidarity and integration, which he believed was the glue that holds society together. Social integration, in other words, is the degree of ties to social groups, and it is high where there is an emphasis on shared values, interaction, strong social ties, group commitment, and little emphasis on individualism. Areas which lack social integration have little social control over members of the community, which gives rise to social disorganization. Durkheim blamed the breakdown in social integration on "the social, moral and political isolation of self-interested individuals, unattached to social ideals and unamenable to social control" which appears in the forms of "dangerous ideas", "social or economic anarchy", and "the prevalence of self-interested attitudes among individuals" (Lukes, 1972, p. 195-196). In his view, it is this lack of social integration that causes such social phenomena as suicide and divorce.

This pattern is reflected in the fact that areas characterized by high social integration have lower divorce rates. There are several basic reasons for this pattern. First, the people in these communities are not anonymous. Everybody knows your name, knows your relatives, and knows what you're doing most of the time. They are concerned about your well-being, sometimes to the point of meddling. Therefore, they know when a couple is having trouble and may try to help.

Second, people who live in areas which lack social integration may feel isolated. They may have many acquaintances, but few close friends. Therefore, a couple may have no one that they feel comfortable talking to about their marital problems and no source of emotional support.

Third, areas which are not socially integrated tend to emphasize individualism or self-interested attitudes. To put it in modern terms, you are supposed to "get ahead" and "look out for yourself". This egotism promotes a lack of trust and, therefore, no strong social ties. As a consequence, people don't offer help to couples who are having problems and don't seek help when they, themselves, need it.

Also, areas that consist mainly of nuclear families tend to have lower social integration, because they lack the support system provided by the extended family. In addition, they lack the social control of the extended family in discouraging divorce. Not only is the extended family a source of social control, but friends and neighbors are also sources. The costs of divorce, in the form of social ostracism, may be greater than the benefits. A couple may not want to risk being treated as an outcast or face the stigma of being divorced.

Areas characterized by low social integration are typically urban areas, and the fact that higher levels of urbanization are associated with lower levels of social integration has been supported by previous research (Breault and Kposowa, 1987; Fenelon, 1971). People who live in urban areas are more likely to feel anonymous and isolated. Urban areas are highly individualistic, lack the social control that discourages

divorce, and tend to consist mainly of nuclear families. As a result, divorce rates vary as a positive function of urbanization level.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There are a number of studies that have examined the effect of degree of urbanization and other variables on the divorce rate. One such study was conducted by Lobodzinska (1983) who examined the divorce rates in urban and rural areas in Poland from 1949 to 1981 and found consistently higher rates in urban areas. In fact, there are four times as many divorces in urban areas in Poland as in rural areas. For example, the divorce rate per 1,000 population in Poland in 1975 was 1.8 in urban areas and .4 in rural areas. In 1977, the rate was 1.9 for urban areas and .4 for rural areas, and the 1981 rates were 1.6 and .4 for urban and rural areas respectively.

Lobodzinska (1983) also examined the divorce rates in Warsaw, Lodz, Cracow, Poznan, and Wroclaw, which are the five largest cities in Poland, and concluded that "divorce is most characteristic for major metropolitan areas" (p. 933). She also stated that the divorce rates in rural areas have been increasing in the past few years because of the effects of urbanization on the rural way of life. By this statement, she meant that the lifestyles, family structure, and attitudes about marriage that are characteristic of urban areas are beginning to influence rural areas.

Divorce was legalized in Poland in 1946. Today, the divorce rate is almost three times as high as it was at that time. Although the divorce rate in Poland is much lower than in the U.S. (the divorce rate in the U.S. is about five times higher than Poland's divorce rate), there is the same general trend toward a higher divorce rate.

According to Lobodzinska (1983) one reason for the differences in the divorce rates in urban and rural areas is that the urban population in Poland has almost doubled in the past 40 years. "Thus, the transition from an agricultural to an industrial

economy and from a rural into an urban society have accelerated the family's metamorphosis" (Lobodzinska, 1983, p. 927). Other reasons are greater "social acceptance, lesser restrictions, weakening family ties, less social and family control, spouses' economic independence, (and) women's emancipation" in urban areas (Lobodzinska, 1983, p. 937). These characteristics of urban areas can be thought of in terms of social integration.

In 1960, Kawashima and Steiner (cited in Kumagai, 1983) conducted a study on the effects of urbanization and industrialization on divorce rates in Japan and found that the divorce rate increased as the level of urbanization and industrialization increased. Kumagai (1983) replicated their study by examining the divorce rates from 1960 to 1980. She tested the hypotheses that "the divorce rate in Japan as a whole has risen over the last two decades", and that "a higher divorce rate exists in urban-industrial areas within Japan than in rural-agricultural areas (p. 86)." She found support for both hypotheses.

Kumagai (1983) states that industrialization and urbanization are related to high divorce rates. Industrialization and urbanization go together. In other words, when an area becomes industrialized, it is also likely to become urbanized. Although a divorce rate in Japan of 1.22 per 1,000 population in 1980 is much lower than for most Western industrialized nations, the trend is the same, toward higher divorce rates.

Kumagai (1983) believes that the number of nuclear families in a society has a positive effect on the divorce rate. In other words, the divorce rate increases as the number of nuclear families increases. Goode (cited in Kumagai, 1983) states that "the nuclear family is functional in modern industrialized society . . . because an industrialized society:

1. requires a high rate of geographic mobility;
2. offers a wide range of economic opportunities, and therefore, allows a high rate of social mobility (particularly upward);
3. creates many kinds of agencies, institutions, and organizations to address individual problems and needs;

4. emphasizes personal achievement rather than an individual's ascriptive background . . . ; and
5. regards children as an economic liability rather than an economic asset . . .

Such a family system contributes to an increase in the divorce rate in urban areas" (p. 86), because of the lack of support and social control (social integration) which is provided by the extended family.

Kumagai (1983) states that other reasons for the increasing divorce rate are changes in the lifestyles of the Japanese people to that of Western societies and the increasing independence of Japanese women. She also states that the increase in the divorce rate may have been caused by the post World War II baby boom. In other words, there was an "increase in the proportion of divorceable couples" (p. 104). As a result of the changing divorce patterns in Japan, an increasing number of women initiate divorce and remain single, and the fertility rate is declining. Thus, the demographic outlook for Japan is changing (Kumagai, 1983).

Reynolds et al. (1984) conducted a county-level study of Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. They used 1970 Census data and found that "the county divorce rate is associated negatively with the importance of farming, the prevalence of religious affiliations, the attraction of interstate migrants, the socio-economic well-being of the population, and the restrictiveness of courts in granting divorces" (p. 118). Although they were not looking specifically at social integration, their findings are consistent with this notion. However, one problem with this study is that it is limited to states that are largely rural. Another problem is that it is confined to one time period.

Glick and Lin (1986) attribute the increase since 1960 in the divorce rate to the decreasing stigma against divorce, increasing employment and education levels for women, and a decreasing number of families with three or more children. One factor that will keep the divorce rate high is the aging of the "baby boomers", because the 25 to 40 age range has the highest probability of divorce, and the number of adults in this

age group will not peak until about 1990 (Glick in press, cited in Glick and Lin, 1986). They also cited Kemper's 1983 study in which he stated some factors that decrease the divorce rate such as "the trend toward lower remarriage rates (thereby reducing the pool of eligibles for redivorce), the rising age at marriage (thereby making young adults more mature in their selection of marriage partners) and a 'growing fear of consequences of divorce'" (Glick and Lin, 1986, p. 744-745). Again, where social integration is high, divorce is extremely costly for couples.

Trovato (1986) studied regional differences in divorce rates in Canada in 1971 and in 1978 and found a positive relationship between migration and divorce rates. He suggested that such cultural factors as weakening of traditional values about the family may be used to explain the region effect.

South (1985) conducted a study on the postwar United States and found a positive relationship between unemployment and divorce rates. Also, there are strong relationships between changes in the age structure and the numbers of women in the work-force and the divorce rate.

Glenn and Shelton (1985) conducted a study of the United States using nine census regions and the Residential Mobility Index as an indicator of social integration and found an inverse relationship between social integration and divorce rates. They believed that there is high social integration when group membership and social relationships are stable. "High rates of geographic movement should tend to disrupt social relationships, create anonymity, and impede enforcement of at least the norms that pertain to the more private aspects of behavior" (Glenn and Shelton, 1985, p. 643). Glenn and Shelton (1985) also found an increase in divorce rates from East to West and North to South.

Fenelon (1971) used 1960 Census data and found that migration was related to divorce because "people who migrate, either from one state to another or within the states, are not immediately assimilated by the communities that receive them. In states

that have a high number of migrants there should be less overall social integration than in states having a low number of migrants" (p. 322). Again, by social integration Fenelon (1971) means the degree of the ties to social groups. He also found a regional difference with increases in the divorce rate from East to West and North to South because of the "frontier effect". Frontiers attract people who are independent, self-reliant, adventurous, and reluctant to conform (Pang and Hanson, 1968). Add to these characteristics the fact that frontiers have fewer social restraints and you have a possible explanation for the higher divorce rate in the West (Fenelon, 1971).

Breault and Kposowa (1987) used church membership, population change, and urbanization as indicators of social integration. They felt that there is a relationship between urbanity and low social integration because urban areas have less social control. Therefore, divorce is less costly for urban couples than for rural couples. This lack of social control comes from the "heightened impact of economic relations on social life, derived mainly from the economically competitive and rationalistic work environment as well as the reduced insulation people have from that environment" (p. 553). In 1987, they conducted a nationwide study of 3,111 counties using 1980 data. Using the divorce rate as their dependent variable, they found strong positive relationships for urbanization and population change. Also, there were negative relationships for church membership, median income, percent Hispanic, and median age, but no relationship was found for professional employment, percent black, and high school graduates.

Wilkinson et al. (1983) found little relationship between new in-migration and the divorce rate. However, as Breault and Kposowa (1987) point out, their study was limited to 292 counties in the Old West region of the country from 1970 to 1975. Since this area is mainly rural, there wouldn't be much variation in in-migration.

SUMMARY

The social integration concept, originally developed by Durkheim as an explanation for variations in suicide rates, has become a popular theoretical explanation for the relationship between urbanization and divorce rates (Breault & Kposowa, 1987; Fenelon, 1971). Areas that have high social integration provide the social control and social support that makes divorce less likely. They have strong family and religious ties, a relatively stable population, and less emphasis on individualism.

Findings of previous studies undertaken in a variety of different settings suggest support for the hypothesis that the divorce rate increases as the degree of urbanization increases. Also, past research has reported that the unemployment rate and women in the work-force have positive effects on the divorce rate, while church attendance, church membership, and socioeconomic status have negative effects.

Although previous research supports the existence of an positive relationship between urbanization and the divorce rate, it is characterized by several shortcomings. These include: many of the studies are limited to one time period; based on unrepresentative samples; used few control variables; and/or used large ecological units. This thesis will expand our knowledge of the relationship between urbanization and divorce rates by addressing these deficiencies. Specifically, this thesis examines the effects of urbanization on divorce rates, controlling for selected variables, at two different times for a representative sample of 300 U. S. counties.

Chapter Three

DATA AND METHOD

INTRODUCTION

As noted in Chapter Two, the social integration concept has been used in previous studies as an explanation for the relationship between urbanization and divorce rates. However, these studies are characterized by several shortcomings, which this thesis remedies.

This chapter summarizes the data and method used in the empirical test of the relationship between urbanization and the divorce rate. The chapter is organized into four parts: (1) discussion of the variables; (2) discussion of the sample; (3) discussion of the method of analysis; and (4) summary.

VARIABLES

In this section, the independent, dependent, and control variables are discussed and defined. The rationale for including these variables in this thesis is also addressed, and the sources of the data are cited.

Independent Variable

Degree of urbanization is measured in two ways to assess the stability of the relationship between urbanization and the divorce rate. First, it is defined as the proportion of a county's total population residing in communities of at least 2,500 as of April 1, 1970 and 1980. This definition is commonly used by the U.S. Census Bureau. Second, degree of urbanization is also defined as the proportion of a county's

total population residing in communities of 50,000 or more people as of April 1, 1970 and 1980. Data for these measures were obtained from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1977: Table 2; 1983: Table B; 1973: Table 9; 1981: Table 3).

Dependent Variable

Divorce rate is measured as the number of divorces per 1,000 population in a county as of April 1, 1970 and 1980. Data for this variable were obtained from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1977: Table 2; 1983: Table B). This is a commonly used measure of the divorce rate.

Control Variables

Previous studies (Breault and Kposowa, 1987; Kawashima and Steiner, 1960; Kumagai, 1983; Glick and Lin, 1986; Lobodzinska, 1983; Reynolds et al., 1984; Trovato, 1986; South, 1985; Glenn and Shelton, 1985; Fenelon, 1971) have found the following variables to have an impact on the divorce rate: church membership, percent population change, median family income, percent unemployed, median population age, percent in professional employment, and percent nonwhite. Therefore, they have been included as control variables.

Church membership has been included because religious affiliation has been found to be an important source of social integration (Breault and Kposowa, 1987; Fenelon, 1971), thereby decreasing the likelihood of divorce. The only way to measure religious affiliation at the county level is to use the existing data on church membership. The data for this variable come from Johnson et al. (1974) for 1970 and Quinn et al. (1982) for 1980.

High population turnover has been related to low social integration and fewer

strong social ties (Breault and Kposowa, 1987; Glenn and Shelton, 1985; Fenelon, 1971; Trovato, 1986). Percent population change is for the periods 1960 to 1970 and 1970 to 1980 and data were collected from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1977: Table 2; 1983: Table B).

Median family income was included as a control variable because studies have found that low income is associated with marital instability (Breault and Kposowa, 1987). Median family income is as of 1969 and 1979 and data for this variable were collected from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1977: Table 2; 1983: Table B).

Studies have also found that unemployment is positively related to divorce rates (South, 1985; Breault and Kposowa, 1987). Therefore, unemployment is measured as the percent of unemployed as of April, 1970 and May, 1980 and data were collected from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1977: Table 2; 1983: Table B).

Since there is reason to believe that older populations have lower divorce rates (Breault and Kposowa, 1987), I used median age as a control variable. Data as of April 1, 1970 were collected from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1973: Table 35), and data as of April 1, 1980 come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983: Table B).

Occupational status has been found to be negatively associated with divorce rates (Breault and Kposowa, 1987; Glenn and Shelton, 1985). Percent in professional employment has been used as an indicator of occupational status. Data for this variable for 1970 come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1973: Table 122), and data for 1980 come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983: Table B).

Researchers have found conflicting results about the direction of the relationship between race and the divorce rate (Breault and Kposowa, 1987; Fenelon, 1971). Even though percent nonwhite has not been found to be a strong predictor of divorce rates, it was included as a control variable. Data on percent nonwhite come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1973: Table 134) for 1970 and the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983: Table B) for 1980.

SAMPLE

A probability sampling technique was employed in this thesis. The United States was stratified into the four census regions: Northeast, North Central, South, and West. Since there are great differences in the number of counties in each region (Northeast, 217; North Central, 1056; South, 1384; and West, 445), I took a proportionate random sample from each of these regions. Therefore, for a total sample of 300 counties, I randomly drew 21 counties from the Northeast region, 102 from the North Central region, 134 from the Southern region, and 43 from the Western region. The one-tenth rule was used to determine the total size of the sample (one-tenth of the total number of counties in the United States, rounded to 300 for convenience). First, four sampling frames (one from each region) were obtained from U.S. Census materials. For each region, an alphabetical listing of the states and the counties within each state was constructed and numbered. Next, a table of random numbers was used to select the counties to be included in the sample. Starting at a random place on the table, numbers were systematically chosen, ignoring numbers which were too high or duplicates. This process continued until the desired number of cases were obtained. The sample consisted of the counties which had the corresponding numbers. Data from the same counties were drawn for 1970 and 1980.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

I analyzed my data using ordinary least squares regression to assess the impact of the key independent variables and the seven control variables on the divorce rate in 1970 and 1980. The first regression for 1970 contained the 2,500 measure of urbanization (proportion of the population of the county living in areas of 2,500 or more population), and the second regression for 1970 was run with the 50,000 measure of urbanization (proportion of the population of the county living in areas of 50,000 or

more population). For 1980, one regression was run with the 2,500 measure of urbanization, and a second regression contained the 50,000 measure of urbanization.

The hypothesized effect of each of the variables on the divorce rate are summarized in the following regression equation:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 - b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 - b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 - b_6X_6 - b_7X_7 + b_8X_8 + e$$

where,

Y = divorce rate per 1,000 population, 1970 or 1980;

a = intercept;

b = coefficient to be estimated;

X1 = proportion of population living in areas of 2,500 or more, 1970 or 1980,

or

proportion of population living in areas of 50,000 or more, 1970 or 1980;

X2 = percent church membership, 1970 or 1980;

X3 = percent population change, 1960 to 1970 or 1970 to 1980;

X4 = median family income, 1970 or 1980;

X5 = percent unemployment, 1970 or 1980;

X6 = median population age, 1970 or 1980;

X7 = percent in professional employment, 1970 or 1980;

X8 = percent nonwhite, 1970 or 1980;

e = error term.

SUMMARY

This chapter summarized the data and method used in the analysis of the effects

of urbanization on the divorce rate for 1970 and 1980. The independent, dependent, and control variables were defined and discussed. The sampling technique and procedure were addressed. Finally, the method of analysis was presented.

Chapter Four

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of four empirical tests of the hypothesis that the higher the level of urbanization in a county, the higher the divorce rate. The chapter consists of three major sections: (1) discussion of the bivariate results and tests for multicollinearity; (2) discussion of the regression results; and (3) summary and conclusions.

BIVARIATE RESULTS AND TESTS FOR MULTICOLLINEARITY

Table 1 contains the zero-order correlations between all of the variables used in the analysis for 1970, and Table 2 contains the correlations for the variables for 1980. The correlation coefficients for both 1970 and 1980 suggest support for the hypothesized relationship between urbanization and divorce rates. For 1970, the correlation between urbanization and the divorce rate was .42 for the 2,500 measure and .23 for the 50,000 measure. A coefficient of .39 was obtained for the 2,500 measure and .32 for the 50,000 measure for 1980. While these results are fairly strong, examining the bivariate relationships is not the best way to test a hypothesis.

We can begin to access for multicollinearity by examining the bivariate relations between the variables. High coefficients are important symptoms of this problem. Except for the correlation between the two measures of urbanization, all of the coefficients are less than .6 for both 1970 and 1980. This preliminary check suggests that multicollinearity is not a problem. However, we are only looking at two variables at a time, and it is possible that one of these variables is a combination of some of the

others. Therefore, the coefficients could be low, suggesting no problem with multicollinearity when, indeed, you have a major problem. As an additional check for multicollinearity, one must examine the relationship between each independent variable and all of the other independent variables. An accepted technique for assessing for multicollinearity, presented in Lewis-Beck (1980), involves regressing each independent variable on all of the other independent variables. A coefficient of determination approaching 1.0 indicates a problem of multicollinearity. Since none of the coefficients were higher than .532, no serious problems were found. The results of these regressions are found in Table 3.

REGRESSION RESULTS

A total of four regressions were run in the analysis of the data for this thesis. For both 1970 and 1980, two different measures of urbanization were used. These results are discussed in the following two sections.

1970 results. Table 4 contains the results obtained by regressing divorce rate on urbanization and the control variables for 1970. In Equation 1, urbanization was measured as the percent of the population residing in areas of 2,500 or more population. Urbanization has the strongest effect on the divorce rate (a standardized coefficient of .495). The unstandardized coefficient is more than twice the size of its standard error. This result means that counties which had a high proportion of the population living in urban areas had high divorce rates.

Percent church membership has an unstandardized coefficient which is more than twice the size of its standard error. It has the expected negative effect on the divorce rate and has the second highest standardized coefficient (-.294). Therefore, counties with a high percentage of residents who are church members have lower divorce rates.

Next, the variable of percent population change has the third highest

standardized coefficient (.205) and has the expected positive effect on the divorce rate. It also has an unstandardized coefficient which is twice the size of its standard error. This result indicates that counties with high population change had high divorce rates.

The remaining variables do not have unstandardized coefficients twice the size of their standard errors. That is, median family income, percent unemployment, median population age, percent professional employment, and percent nonwhite had minimal effects on the divorce rate.

In Equation 2 for 1970, urbanization was measured as the proportion of the population living in areas of 50,000 or more people. All of the coefficients are in the expected direction, but only urbanization, percent church membership, and percent population change have unstandardized coefficients more than twice the size of their standard errors. Urbanization has a fairly high standardized coefficient of .167. However, percent population change (.276) and percent church membership (-.212) have slightly higher standardized coefficients.

1980 results. Table 5 contains the regression results for 1980. Equation 3 reports results when the 2,500 measure of urbanization was used. Only urbanization, percent church membership, percent population change, percent unemployment, and percent professional employment have unstandardized coefficients twice the size of their standard errors, all of which are in the expected direction. Once again, urbanization has the strongest effect (standardized coefficient of .501) on the divorce rate. Percent church membership has the second highest standardized coefficient (-.243). However, unlike the 1970 results, percent professional employment has the third highest standardized coefficient (-.208). Next, the standardized coefficient for percent unemployment was .170 and for percent population change the standardized coefficient was .138. Median family income, median population age, and percent nonwhite have minimal effects on the divorce rate for 1980.

Finally, Equation 4 (1980) was run with the 50,000 measure of urbanization. The unstandardized coefficients for urbanization, church membership, percent population change, percent unemployment, and percent professional employment are, once again, in the expected direction and twice their standard errors. Urbanization is the most important variable (standardized coefficient of .310), followed by church membership (-.186), percent unemployment (.176), percent population change (.154), and percent professional employment (-.125). Percent nonwhite, median family income, and median population age have little effect on the divorce rate for 1980.

Table 1. Correlation Coefficients for 1970.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1.00									
2	.42	1.00								
3	-.28	.08	1.00							
4	.36	.43	-.22	1.00						
5	.19	.54	-.02	.50	1.00					
6	.13	.00	-.29	.02	-.11	1.00				
7	-.14	-.34	.10	-.22	-.23	-.12	1.00			
8	.23	.56	-.13	.47	.54	.15	-.36	1.00		
9	.01	-.10	-.22	-.11	-.36	.04	-.28	-.11	1.00	
10	.23	.66	.03	.31	.49	-.05	-.27	.43	-.06	1.00

1 -- Divorce Rate

2 -- Percent Urban (2,500)

3 -- Percent Church Membership

4 -- Percent Population Change

5 -- Median Family Income

6 -- Percent Unemployment

7 -- Median Population Age

8 -- Percent Professional Employment

9 -- Percent Nonwhite

10 -- Percent Urban (50,000)

Table 2. Correlation Coefficients for 1980.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1.00									
2	.39	1.00								
3	-.31	.02	1.00							
4	.26	.05	-.39	1.00						
5	.19	.56	-.08	.15	1.00					
6	.19	-.09	-.31	.11	-.23	1.00				
7	-.14	-.30	.15	-.13	-.24	-.13	1.00			
8	-.01	.28	-.14	-.01	.07	.17	-.21	1.00		
9	.09	.04	-.18	-.01	-.21	.04	-.29	.15	1.00	
10	.32	.75	-.04	.04	.51	-.09	-.25	.15	.08	1.00

1 -- Divorce Rate

2 -- Percent Urban (2,500)

3 -- Percent Church Membership

4 -- Percent Population Change

5 -- Median Family Income

6 -- Percent Unemployment

7 -- Median Population Age

8 -- Percent Professional Employment

9 -- Percent Nonwhite

10 -- Percent Urban (50,000)

Table 3. Multicollinearity Tests for 1970 and 1980.

COEFFICIENTS OF DETERMINATION

VARIABLE	<u>1970</u>		<u>1980</u>	
	Using % Urban 2,500	Using % Urban 50,000	Using % Urban 2,500	Using % Urban 50,000
Urbanization (2,500)	.411		.398	
Urbanization (50,000)		.287		.295
Percent Church Membership	.211	.174	.281	.264
Percent Population Change	.345	.326	.163	.163
Median Family Income	.527	.532	.458	.426
Percent Unemployment	.139	.139	.202	.202
Median Population Age	.267	.260	.231	.223
Percent Professional Employment	.457	.422	.131	.078
Percent Nonwhite	.305	.307	.230	.242

Table 4. Regression of Divorce Rate on Urbanization and Control Variables for 1970 (n = 300).

Regressor Variable	<u>DIVORCE RATE</u>			
	<u>Equation 1</u>		<u>Equation 2</u>	
	Unstand- ardized Coeff. (b)	Stand- ardized Coeff. (B)	Unstand- ardized Coeff. (b)	Stand- ardized Coeff. (B)
Urbanization (2,500)	.029 * (.004)	.495		
Urbanization (50,000)			.011 * (.004)	.167
Percent Church Membership	-.026 * (.005)	-.294	-.019 * (.005)	-.212
Percent Population Change	.019 * (.006)	.205	.025 * (.006)	.276
Median Family Income	.000 (.000)	-.129	.000 (.000)	-.042
Percent Unemployment	.029 (.034)	.045	.040 (.036)	.062
Median Population Age	.008 (.020)	.024	-.007 (.022)	-.020
Percent Professional Employment	-.055 (.031)	-.120	.000 (.032)	-.001
Percent Nonwhite	-.005 (.006)	-.043	-.003 (.007)	-.026
Constant	4.273		3.828	
Adjusted R square	.296		.179	

() Indicates standard error

* Unstandardized coefficient twice the size of the standard error

Table 5. Regression of Divorce Rate on Urbanization and Control Variables for 1980 (n = 300).

Regressor Variable	<u>DIVORCE RATE</u>			
	<u>Equation 3</u>		<u>Equation 4</u>	
	Unstand-ardized Coeff. (b)	Stand-ardized Coeff. (B)	Unstand-ardized Coeff. (b)	Stand-ardized Coeff. (B)
Urbanization (2,500)	.038 * (.005)	.501		
Urbanization (50,000)			.025 * (.005)	.310
Percent Church Membership	-.030 * (.007)	-.243	-.023 * (.007)	-.186
Percent Population Change	.015 * (.006)	.138	.017 * (.006)	.154
Median Family Income	.000 (.000)	-.055	.000 (.000)	.058
Percent Unemployment	.108 * (.035)	.170	.112 * (.037)	.176
Median Population Age	.031 (.033)	.052	.010 (.035)	.017
Percent Professional Employment	-.095 * (.024)	-.208	-.057 * (.025)	-.125
Percent Nonwhite	.009 (.009)	.057	.010 (.009)	.062
Constant	5.284		4.398	
Adjusted R square	.309		.225	

() Indicates standard error

* Unstandardized coefficient twice the size of the standard error.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the empirical tests of the effect of urbanization on the divorce rate for 1970 and 1980 were presented in this chapter. The results indicate that urbanization, regardless of the particular measure used, had a significant positive effect on the divorce rate. These findings suggest strong support for the hypothesis.

The results of these analyses are consistent with the findings of previous research (Breault and Kposowa, 1987; Lobodzinska, 1983; Kawashima and Steiner, 1960; Kumagai, 1983; Fenelon, 1971; Glenn and Supancic, 1984; Trovato, 1986). All four of the tests yielded very strong, significant results in the predicted direction. Therefore, the relationship between urbanization and divorce rates is robust. In other words, the findings do not appear to be a result of the particular time period or measure used.

Chapter Five

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

This final chapter will provide an overview of the thesis and draw some basic conclusions. It consists of three parts: (1) summary; (2) discussion of the implications; and (3) suggestions for future research.

SUMMARY

Divorce has been a social issue in the United States for the past several decades. Except for a few periods of decline, the divorce rate has been steadily rising. The question is what factors have contributed to this increase?

In the past, most of the studies on divorce have focused on the individual determinants of divorce such as religion and religious commitment, the presence or absence of children, attitudes about women in the work-force, the financial situation of the family, unemployment, education level, race, age at marriage, and changes in divorce laws. This research is important, but it does not allow us to explain the increasing divorce rate.

Aggregate level studies begin to allow us to examine the question of increased rates. The focus of these studies has been on the concept of social integration as an explanation for the variation in the divorce rate. Among other things, urbanization has been used as a measure of integration and has been found to be an important predictor of divorce rates. Higher degrees of urbanization are seen to contribute to higher divorce rates because of reduced social integration. Areas that have high social

integration provide the social control and social support which makes divorce less likely. They have a relatively stable population, strong family and religious ties, and less emphasis on individualism.

Although most of these aggregate studies have found a strong positive relationship between urbanization and divorce rates, these studies are characterized by one or more deficiencies such as being limited to one time period, being based on an unrepresentative sample, using few control variables, and using large ecological units such as states or regions.

This thesis attempted to remedy the above mentioned limitations and tried to fill a void in the previous literature and contribute to the knowledge base about divorce in our society. This thesis tested the hypothesis that the higher the level of urbanization in a county, the higher the divorce rate. As opposed to other studies, this thesis used seven control variables, a sample which is representative of the United States, and two time periods to ensure that the findings were robust.

The results of the four empirical tests are consistent with the previous research. A strong positive relationship was found between urbanization and the divorce rate. This finding was robust over time and for the different measures. Percent church membership and percent population change were also consistently significant predictors of divorce rates for both time periods. Percent unemployment and percent professional employment had strong effects on the divorce rate, but only for 1980. The remaining variables, median family income, median population age, and percent nonwhite, were not important predictors of the divorce rate.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this thesis suggest strong support for the relationship between urbanization and divorce rates which is consistent with the Durkheimian social

integration thesis. As noted in Chapter Two, social integration implies strong ties to social groups, shared values, interaction, group commitment, and little emphasis on individualism. By comparison, disintegration appears in the form of isolation, anonymity, individualism, and lack of social control, which contributes to high divorce rates. In other words, if the ties to social groups are weak, the community has little control over its members, and, consequently, the divorce rate is high.

Since the population in the United States is shifting from rural to urban areas, the relationship between urbanization and divorce rate is of increasing importance. There are several reasons for this change in the population structure of the United States. First, as technology advances, farming becomes more efficient, and there is less demand for farmers. Since there are few job opportunities in rural areas, other than farming, people are moving to cities to seek employment. Second, the population, in general, is growing. Therefore, what may once have been rural areas are now becoming urban. Some cities expand to the point that they subsume the surrounding small towns. It is because of this increase in urbanization that divorce rates should continue to increase, unless other changes are made.

Although Durkheim's notion of social integration was not directly tested in this thesis, my results do appear to support this conceptualization. If we assume that urban areas are less integrated than rural areas, then one would expect higher divorce rates in urban settings. Consistent with Durkheim's thesis, this research found that areas which are highly urban have higher divorce rates. Also, church membership was found to be negatively associated with divorce rates. This suggests support for the social integration thesis. In other words, it is not just the religious aspect of church membership that is important (that is, promoting values and attitudes prohibiting or discouraging divorce), but it would appear that being members of a church reduces the isolation that individuals may otherwise feel.

The findings of this thesis also support the previous research on divorce,

indicating that despite their limitations, these studies were accurate in their results. For example, the results of this thesis agree with those of Breault and Kposowa (1987), Lobodzinska (1983), Kawashima and Steiner (1960), and Kumagai (1983) that there is a strong positive relationship between urbanization and divorce rates. The findings of Breault and Kposowa (1987) and Reynolds et al. (1984) for church membership as a predictor of divorce rates were also supported, and the findings of South (1985) of the positive effect of unemployment on the divorce rates are in agreement with those of this thesis. Finally, the results of this thesis are consistent with those of Breault and Kposowa (1987), Reynolds et al. (1984), Glenn and Shelton (1985), and Fencelon (1971) for the positive relationship between population change and divorce rates.

Not only were the studies of urbanization and divorce rates in the U.S. supported, but the ones conducted for Poland (Lobodzinska, 1983) and Japan (Kawashima and Steiner, 1960; Kumagai, 1983) were also upheld. Therefore, the problem of urbanization and divorce rates is not limited to the U.S. but is a world-wide concern.

In the past, divorce has been blamed on such things as the declining moral fiber of people or a decreasing emphasis on marriage. The fact of the matter is that marriage is as popular today as it was 100 years ago. Even though the divorce rate is high, so is the remarriage rate. As the results of this thesis indicate, these explanations are not necessarily the only ones, or even the most accurate ones which can be used to understand divorce. It is also the lack of social integration in highly urbanized areas which contributes to high divorce rates. Therefore, the problem is not just one that needs to be addressed by the individuals involved, but counties, states, and nations also need to deal with it. It is a societal problem. Therefore, ways to increase social integration in urban areas need to be developed.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several shortcomings of this thesis. One is that county-level data for all of the variables were only available for 1970 and 1980. One would ideally want to include more time periods to see how the divorce rate is related to the predictor variables at different points in time. The results found for 1970 and 1980 may not be generalizable to the past or to the future.

In future studies, one might want to control for variables such as religious affiliation, church attendance, women in the work-force, and the presence or absence of children. These variables have been found to be predictors of divorce rates, but data are not readily available at the county level. One might also want to include other measures of social integration in addition to urbanization or to specifically examine the relationship between urbanization and social integration. In addition, future researchers may want to examine those community-based institutions which promote social integration and their relationship to divorce rates. For example, if we look at the impact of church membership on divorce rates, it is useful to distinguish between churches which promote social integration through emphasis on group cohesion and interaction, as opposed to those churches which focus mainly on issues of individual salvation. It would also be useful if future researchers used lagged panel designs for different time periods to assess the effect of urbanization on changes in divorce rates. Finally, data from other nations needs to be analyzed. These studies should further fill the gap in the divorce literature and increase our understanding of the determinants of divorce rates.

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APPENDIX A:

COUNTIES INCLUDED IN THE SAMPLE FOR 1970 AND 1980

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

<u>County, STATE</u>	<u>County, STATE</u>	<u>County, STATE</u>
Bond, ILL	Koochiching, MINN	Haakon, S.D.
Ford, ILL	Lac qui Parle, MINN	Jerauld, S.D.
Hamilton, ILL	Lincoln, MINN	Kingsbury, S.D.
Livingston, ILL	Mahnomen, MINN	Lyman, S.D.
Moultrie, ILL	Marshall, MINN	McCook, S.D.
St. Clair, ILL	Morrison, MINN	Perkins, S.D.
Tazewell, ILL	Nicollet, MINN	Tripp, S.D.
Washington, ILL	Polk, MINN	Burnett, WISC
Elkhart, IND	Pope, MINN	Dodge, WISC
Ripley, IND	Renville, MINN	Dunn, WISC
Union, IND	Sherburne, MINN	Jackson, WISC
Bremer, IOWA	Wabasha, MINN	Juneau, WISC
Buena Vista, IOWA	Caldwell, MO	Price, WISC
Guthrie, IOWA	Christian, MO	Waukesha, WISC
Jefferson, IOWA	Dade, MO	
Linn, IOWA	De Kalb, MO	
Marshall, IOWA	Hickory, MO	
Sac, IOWA	Jasper, MO	
Warren, IOWA	Laclede, MO	
Wayne, IOWA	Lincoln, MO	
Crawford, KS	Osage, MO	
Franklin, KS	Pettis, MO	
Graham, KS	Phelps, MO	
Greeley, KS	Scott, MO	
Jewell, KS	Wayne, MO	
Morris, KS	Banner, NEB	
Phillips, KS	Cuming, NEB	
Russell, KS	Dodge, NEB	
Stafford, KS	Logan, NEB	
Wallace, KS	Barnes, N.D.	
Woodson, KS	Billings, N.D.	
Baraga, MICH	Burke, N.D.	
Berrien, MICH	Dunn, N.D.	
Cheboygan, MICH	Eddy, N.D.	
Chippewa, MICH	La Moure, N.D.	
Eaton, MICH	Logan, N.D.	
Grand Traverse, MICH	McHenry, N.D.	
Houghton, MICH	Adams, OHIO	
Kalamazoo, MICH	Belmont, OHIO	
Marquette, MICH	Defiance, OHIO	
St. Joseph, MICH	Hancock, OHIO	
Aitkin, MINN	Perry, OHIO	
Isanti, MINN	Sandusky, OHIO	
Kandiyohi, MINN	Summit, OHIO	

APPENDIX A CONTINUED

WEST REGIONCounty, STATE

Alpine, CA
 Butte, CA
 Kern, CA
 Lassen, CA
 Santa Clara, CA
 Sierra, CA
 Costilla, CO
 Larimer, CO
 Mineral, CO
 Ouray, CO
 Prowers, CO
 Rio Blanco, CO
 Adams, IDAHO
 Boise, IDAHO
 Clark, IDAHO
 Clearwater, IDAHO
 Custer, IDAHO
 Franklin, IDAHO
 Owyhee, IDAHO
 Payette, IDAHO
 Cascade, MONT
 Daniels, MONT
 Garfield, MONT
 Missoula, MONT
 Phillips, MONT
 Richland, MONT
 Sanders, MONT
 Toole, MONT
 Valley, MONT
 Lincoln, NEV
 Nye, NEV
 Bernalillo, N.M.
 Hidalgo, N.M.
 Douglas, OR
 Linn, OR
 Cache, UTAH
 Davis, UTAH
 Garfield, UTAH
 Utah, UTAH
 Clallam, WASH
 Franklin, WASH
 Jefferson, WASH
 Pacific, WASH

NORTHEAST REGIONCounty, STATE

Hartford, CONN
 Washington, MAINE
 Middlesex, MASS
 Grafton, N.H.
 Camden, N.J.
 Middlesex, N.J.
 Chenango, N.Y.
 Lewis, N.Y.
 Schenectady, N.Y.
 Warren, N.Y.
 Adams, PENN
 Chester, PENN
 Huntingdon, PENN
 Juniata, PENN
 Lawrence, PENN
 Northumberland, PENN
 Venago, PENN
 Wayne, PENN
 Wyoming, PENN
 Orange, VT
 Washington, VT

APPENDIX A CONTINUED

SOUTH REGIONCounty, STATE

Baldwin, ALAB
 DeKalb, ALAB
 Escambia, ALAB
 Houston, ALAB
 Macon, ALAB
 St. Clair, ALAB
 Sumter, ALAB
 Boone, ARK
 Calhoun, ARK
 Crawford, ARK
 Jackson, ARK
 Jefferson, ARK
 Johnson, ARK
 Newton, ARK
 Sevier, ARK
 Bradford, FL
 Brevard, FL
 Calhoun, FL
 Charlotte, FL
 Escambia, FL
 Glades, FL
 Putnam, FL
 St. Johns, FL
 Burke, GA
 Candler, GA
 Catoosa, GA
 Clarke, GA
 Colquitt, GA
 Decatur, GA
 Fannin, GA
 Habersham, GA
 Harris, GA
 Oglethorpe, GA
 Upson, GA
 Webster, GA
 White, GA
 Daviess, KY
 Graves, KY
 Harrison, KY
 Jefferson, KY
 Magoffin, KY
 Meade, KY
 Pendleton, KY
 Powell, KY
 Robertson, KY
 Trigg, KY

County, STATE

Wayne, KY
 Whitley, KY
 Woodford, KY
 Acadia, LA
 East Feliciana, LA
 St. Bernard, LA
 Tensas, LA
 Baltimore, MD
 Caroline, MD
 Alcorn, MISS
 Benton, MISS
 Claiborne, MISS
 Clarke, MISS
 Franklin, MISS
 Jasper, MISS
 Jefferson, MISS
 Jefferson Davis, MISS
 Lowndes, MISS
 Panola, MISS
 Alamance, N.C.
 Alexander, N.C.
 Beaufort, N.C.
 Chatham, N.C.
 Dare, N.C.
 Davidson, N.C.
 Franklin, N.C.
 Gates, N.C.
 Graham, N.C.
 Harnett, N.C.
 Henderson, N.C.
 Iredell, N.C.
 Macon, N.C.
 Madison, N.C.
 Moore, N.C.
 Person, N.C.
 Richmond, N.C.
 Rowan, N.C.
 Union, N.C.
 Atoka, OK
 Ellis, OK
 Johnston, OK
 Nowata, OK
 Oklahoma, OK
 Roger Mills, OK
 Charleston, S.C.
 Greenville, S.C.

County, STATE

Union, S.C.
 Chetham, TENN
 Hambleton, TENN
 Hawkins, TENN
 Madison, TENN
 Rutherford, TENN
 Scott, TENN
 Tipton, TENN
 Wayne, TENN
 Wilson, TENN
 Baylor, TX
 Bexar, TX
 Bowie, TX
 Caldwell, TX
 Cameron, TX
 Chambers, TX
 Concho, TX
 Dallam, TX
 Dawson, TX
 Ector, TX
 Edwards, TX
 Fort Bend, TX
 Gonzales, TX
 Hays, TX
 Jackson, TX
 Live Oak, TX
 Lubbock, TX
 Martin, TX
 Moore, TX
 Wichita, TX
 Bland, VA
 Botetourt, VA
 Buckingham, VA
 Clarke, VA
 Cumberland, VA
 Floyd, VA
 Greene, VA
 Lunenburg, VA
 Madison, VA
 Calhoun, W.V.
 Monongalia, W.V.
 Wirt, W.V.

DIVORCE AND URBANIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES:
A STUDY OF COUNTIES, 1970 AND 1980

by

Robin K. Hizey

B.S., Pittsburg State University, 1986

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the effects of urbanization on divorce rates, controlling for selected variables. Specifically, the hypothesis tested was the higher the level of urbanization (measured first as the proportion of the population living in communities of 2,500 or more and second as the proportion of the population living in communities of 50,000 or more) in a county, the higher the divorce rate. A probability sample of 300 U.S. counties was drawn, stratified by the four census regions, for 1970 and 1980. Regression analyses indicated that urbanization is a strong, significant predictor of divorce rates. This result suggests that higher levels of urbanization lead to higher divorce rates in counties, and the concept of social integration is presented as an explanation for this relationship. Highly urban areas lack the social integration, in the form of social support and control, which makes divorce less likely.

Future researchers may want to look at additional time periods to see how the divorce rate is related to the predictor variables at different points in time. Also, one might want to include additional control variables and other measures of social integration. Finally, other nations should be analyzed.